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(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Cheese for Winter Meals." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Cheese has been popular since earliest days, not only for its flavor but because it is a useful and economical food. In fact, it was probably the first prepared food. Ancient peoples, way back before history, discovered that by making cheese they could preserve the nourishing qualities of milk. Cow's milk, goat's milk, and sheep's milk have all been used in cheese making. And in China, where milk is scarce, they even make cheese from soy beans.

I said that cheese was an economical food, but, of course, that doesn't hold for every kind on the market. You can buy many different varieties of cheese and some of them are expensive imported brands made in foreign countries. But our good American cheddar cheese, often called either just cheddar cheese or plain American cheese, made from whole-milk, is one of the best food bargains. The flavor of American cheese ranges all the way from the mildest of Wisconsin varieties to the sharp cheese which is more typical of New York manufacture. Wisconsin produces about two-thirds of all the cheddar cheese manufactured in the United States, and New York more than any of the other states.

What makes cheese such a bargain in food? Well, to begin with, it is rich in protein and fat. That puts it in the class of main-dish foods along with meat and fish and eggs. A cheese dish fits nicely into a meal when you are not serving meat. And cheese is a good source of Vitamin A -- another item to consider, especially in winter meals. Then, cheese is valuable for its calcium and phosphorus -- both useful minerals in the diet. But cheese has more to recommend it than just an unusual combination of food value. It has special flavor. Its flavor, doubtless, accounts for its popularity and makes it fit in many different places in the meal.

Some people I know have the notion that cheese is an indigestible food. Too bad that such a good food should be slandered and gossiped about this way. The foods specialists insist that cheese is not indigestible at all, if you cook and eat it properly. The unkind rumors about it come from wrong use. Cheese is a concentrated food, so it deserves the place of honor as one of the nourishing items on the menu. It is not a light frilly food, a relish or appetizer, that you can eat on top of a lot of other rich hearty foods. A big piece of cheese with a big piece of pie to top off a big meal -- well, you have to be a pretty hardy soul to stand that combination. But cheese in its place is good food for almost everybody. The specialists even recommend it for children.

Now a word to the wise about cooking cheese. The way you treat cheese on the stove has much to do with its digestibility. Like other protein foods, it toughens if you cook it too long or at too high a temperature. You can easily overcook cheese. Remember that it needs low heat and very little cooking. Overcooking makes it lumpy, stringy and tough. The fat melts out and leaves the solid curd for you to handle. For most cheese dishes it's a good idea to grate or flake or shave the cheese. Soft cheese you can put though a potato ricer or a meat grinder. When cheese is broken up in some such way as this, it will spread more evenly among the other ingredients of the dish, will melt more quickly, and require less cooking than when left in a big lump.

So the two important points to remember about cheese are: First, eat it properly -- give it the place of importance that you do any similar hearty food at a meal; then, cook it at a very moderate temperature for a very short time. And, whenever possible, break it up and distribute it among less concentrated foods.

I couldn't hope to list all the hundreds of good dishes you can make with cheese. But I would like to mention a few ways that cheese can help you out in your midwinter meal problem. To make the same old everyday foods look and taste different, to give them a little zip and tang, there's nothing like a dash of snappy cheese. If you're serving creamed vegetables, you can add some cheese to your white sauce. If you're serving a stew or a casserole, sprinkle some grated cheese over the top. A steaming dish of spinach or some other winter greens is delicious with melted cheese over the top. In fact, you can use a sprinkling of grated cheese and red paprika over almost any hot vegetable successfully.

Because of its tangy flavor, cheese adds interest to bland, mild, starchy foods like rice, spaghetti, noodles, hominy, potatoes or bread. You can make any number of different low-cost and delicious dishes just by combining one of these cereal foods with cheese. And to add extra flavor to a cheese combination like this -- extra flavor and extra good looks -- you can use tomato and onion.

Most good cooks don't need to be reminded of well-known favorites among cheese dishes. But now and then they enjoy news of something new in the cheese line. Have you ever tried hot cheese custard with tomato sauce? If you want to fix up a pretty platter here's an idea. Turn out some steaming yellow cheese custards, baked in individual custard cups, on a hot platter and pour hot tomato sauce over them. Mounds of hot buttered green peas add to the good looks of the platter. If you like, add a few crisp curls of bacon. There's a first course in itself, full of flavor and color -- yellow, red, green and brown. You can serve with the hot platter a bowl of chopped raw vegetable salad. Apricot pie or apricot tarts for dessert.

Now that recipe for cheese custard. Six ingredients:

3 cups milk
1 tablespoon flour
1/2 pound of sharp-flavored cheese, shaved thin
3/4 teaspoon salt
3 eggs, and
5 drops of tabasco sauce, if you have it.

I'll repeat those ingredients. (Repeat.)

Heat the milk in a double boiler, reserving one-half cup of the cold milk to mix with the flour. Stir this flour and milk mixture into the hot milk, add the cheese and salt, and stir until the cheese has melted. Beat the eggs slightly, pour this mixture into them, and add the tabasco sauce. Fill greased cups with the custard, place in a pan surrounded by water, and bake in a moderate oven -- not above 350 degrees F. -- until the custard is set in the center. Test it with the point of a knife. Serve hot.